

Canadian Statement, IGF Consultations Feb. 16 2006

Thank you, Chairman.

Canada is pleased to participate in these open consultations and we intend to continue to play a positive and active role in the Internet Governance Forum.

Canada applauds the decision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to organize this consultation. We are also very appreciative of having you, Mr. Desai, in the chair along with Mr. Kummer in the Secretariat, as we valued your important contributions to the earlier Working Group on Internet Governance exercise and hope to benefit further from your considerable experience

Building on the spirit of the Working Group on Internet Governance, Canada believes the IGF must be based upon principles of openness and inclusiveness. For Canada, it is crucial that all stakeholders be able to participate fully in the IGF and note that multistakeholder, as defined in the WSIS context, includes, “governments, business entities, civil society and inter-governmental organizations”. [paragraph 73 (a), *Tunis Agenda*]

Canada believes it is vital that these Geneva consultations provide the UN Secretary-General with definitive guidance on the structural and logistical aspects of the IGF. The first meeting of the IGF can then focus on a substantive agenda, developed in a way that will permit the first IGF to produce meaningful results.

Canada has always maintained that the WSIS should be about development. In accordance with the successful ICT4D focus of the WSIS, the IGF’s discussions should maintain a focus on capacity building, throughout, fully including participants from developing countries. This would permit all countries and stakeholders to participate more effectively in other existing Internet governance organizations and processes, and enable the effective development of national policies and frameworks for Internet governance.

As for the agenda of the IGF, at least for the first few meetings, Canada believes it is essential to concentrate on issues where a positive outcome can be anticipated, rather than those known to be divisive.

Canada believes that the IGF can begin its work in a positive manner by, “help[ing] to find solutions to the issues arising from the use and misuse of the Internet, of particular concern to everyday users” [paragraph 72 (k), *Tunis Agenda*]. Issues related to stability, trust and confidence significantly impact the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet. If the IGF is successful, its outputs on these issues could contribute to a work programme for the coming years, within the appropriate organisations. Canada does not envisage the establishment of ongoing work programs for the IGF. The IGF must take great care to be non-duplicative in its efforts.

Institutional arrangements around the IGF should be sufficiently flexible and inclusive to attract the best thinkers in the topic areas it is discussing, at any particular meeting. This implies a shifting group of participants. Efforts need to be made to ensure such flexibility.

Moreover, the tools of the information society should be used to their fullest -- both to inform on the activities of the IGF and to engage the competencies of all interested stakeholders. By building a significant on-line presence, the IGF can also facilitate ongoing discussion between its physical meetings.

Canada suggests November 2006 or later for the convening of the first IGF meeting. It should not be in conflict with other major international meetings, in particular, the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference. There is undeniably a link between those parties interested in the ITU and those interested in Internet governance. For many, it would not be possible to prepare for both the Plenipotentiary and the first meeting of the IGF at the same time.

In conclusion, Canada would like to emphasise our view that the role of the IGF is to hold policy discussions. By focusing on areas where the IGF can make a positive contribution, Canada believes that the IGF will be a successful forum for discussion.

Lastly, Canada looks forward to the discussions to take place during these consultations and to the work of the Forum. itself.

Thank you, Chairman.